

AN  
APOLOGY  
FOR THE  
CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

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PRICE 1s. 6d.

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AN  
 A P O L O G Y  
 FOR THE  
 CHRISTIAN SABBATH:  
 IN WHICH  
 THE ARGUMENTS FOR IT ARE STATED,  
 THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST IT ANSWERED,  
 AND  
 THE PROPER MANNER OF SPENDING IT  
 ENFORCED.

Intended as a Defence of "A Practical View, &c."

By W. WILBERFORCE, Esq.

And (by Permission) inscribed to him.

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*The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.* JESUS.

*Were it not for that happy institution of the Lord's-day, we should hardly see any face of Religion among us, and in a little time should scarcely be distinguished from Heathens.*

ABP. SHARPE.

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TO

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.

Member of Parliament for the County of *York*.

S I R,

**T**HIS little Essay owes its origin to YOU; being written with a view to obviate the objections which have been made to your ideas of the Christian Sabbath. I could therefore look to no one so properly for the Patronage which it needs as to YOURSELF. I am duly sensible of the honour you have done me in permitting me to prefix to it YOUR NAME, which I hope may procure it a degree of attention beyond what my own could command. If by this means it should prove, through  
the

the Divine Blessing, more extensively useful in the furtherance of your grand object, the interest of PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY, my highest wishes will be gratified.

That your ability for serving this cause, and, what is inseparably connected with it, that of HUMANITY, may be long continued, and your efforts for both crowned with much success is, Sir, the ardent prayer of

Your very obedient

And obliged servant,

SAMUEL PALMER.

HACKNEY,  
April 9, 1799.

ADVER-

## ADVERTISEMENT.

*THE following tract contains the substance of three discourses, composed with no further view than to be addressed to the author's own congregation. When he was solicited to publish them, he felt no inclination to comply, from a consciousness that he could offer nothing new on the subject. Several judicious friends, however, on perusing the manuscript, having urged the seasonableness of such a publication at the present time, he was led to review it with attention; when it occurred to him that it would be expedient, and more favourable to its circulation, to strike out what was peculiar to pulpit-discourses, and reduce it to the form and size of a small treatise. Having done this, he now humbly submits it to the candour of the public, with the hope that it may be in some degree useful, particularly to young persons, in preserving them from those prevalent notions of the Sabbath, which he cannot but judge highly prejudicial both to social and personal religion.*

*It was at first intended to subjoin a Defence of the Atonement. Possibly, if duly encouraged, it may hereafter appear alone. In the mean time the author begs leave to recommend, as an antidote against Socinianism, Dr. Doddridge's Essay on the Inspiration of the New Testament, lately re-printed by itself; of the same size, form, and price with this.*

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AN  
A P O L O G Y  
FOR THE  
CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE general neglect of divine ordinances and the gross profanation of the day on which they are administered, so justly lamented by serious Christians, are evils which instead of abating are likely in an alarming degree to increase, in consequence of an opinion which has of late been defended in some ingenious publications by professed friends of virtue and religion : *viz.* that the Sabbath was an institution peculiar to Judaism, and abolished by the gospel, so that there is nothing lawful on other days which is unlawful on this. It seems therefore of great importance, in order to maintain the regard due to divine institutions, and promote the cause of practical Christianity, to expose the falsehood of

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such

such a sentiment. For though the generality of well-established Christians will be proof against the arguments urged in its defence, it may be feared that many other persons, and especially the young and unstable, who are fond of reading and hearing what is new and extraordinary, and those especially who wish to be free from the restraints of education, may be in danger of imbibing these loose notions respecting the Sabbath, and of falling into those loose practices to which they lead. Persons, in whom strong habits of piety are not formed, if once brought to believe that there is nothing in Christianity to distinguish one day from another, will soon be induced to throw off all form of religion; and where the form of it is wanting, the power of it cannot exist. Though the heads of families, who adopt the above sentiment, should continue to maintain the propriety and utility of public worship, if they give up the *obligation* to it, and occasionally allow the omission of it, on account of business, pleasure, or company, the rising generation, who are disposed to improve upon their ancestors, in what is most agreeable to themselves, will conclude, that

## INTRODUCTION.

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that what is of no moral obligation is of no necessity, or not of much importance; and from a frequent omission, the gradation to a total neglect will be easy. And if the total neglect of social worship becomes general, a disregard to all religion may be expected quickly to follow; vice of every kind will take its place, and then we should become a nation of infidels and atheists.

It appears therefore to be of great importance not only to maintain the propriety of public worship, as a reasonable and beneficial service, but also to prove (if indeed it be a matter of fact) that God himself hath set apart a certain proportion of our time to be devoted to his service; which is so distinguished from our other time, as not to admit of those employments and amusements which at other seasons are lawful.

This is the object of the present undertaking; in pursuance of which I shall endeavour to state and vindicate the sanctity of the Sabbath in general—to answer the principal objections against its perpetuity—and to shew in what manner it should be observed by Christians.

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C H A P.



## C H A P. I.

*The Sanctity and perpetual Obligation of the Sabbath stated and proved.*

**I**N speaking of the sanctity of the Sabbath, it is not meant to intimate that there is under the gospel any such holiness of *times* any more than of *places*, as there was under the law: all that is here intended to be proved is—that one day in seven is still to be observed as peculiarly devoted to religion, and more especially to the social exercises of it.

The reasonableness of the thing itself affords a strong presumptive argument in its favour. That God is to be worshipped is one of the plainest dictates of the light of nature. If we believe that there is a God, the maker and governor of the universe, to whom we are indebted for our existence, and all our enjoyments, and on whom we have a constant dependence, we must feel ourselves bound to adore his perfections, to praise him for his benefits bestowed, and to supplicate him for every future good.—As we are *social* beings, it seems highly reasonable that we should



should *associate* in these exercises of devotion.

—In order to answer the most valuable ends of such associations, it appears necessary that there should be *stated times* appointed for them, without which these united acts of worship would be very partially performed, and liable to frequent interruptions.

But *how often* we should thus unite in acts of homage to the supreme, and what proportion of our time should be separated from the common concerns of life and dedicated to his service, is what the light of nature could not determine, and mankind would widely differ in their judgments about it, unless the great governor of the universe should himself determine this by a positive law, which no human authority had a right to enjoin.

Now this is what we affirm he hath actually done: that he hath fixed upon every seventh day to be set apart as a day of rest from common employments, and devoted to himself, to be spent in those exercises which are purely religious. Though we allow that certain ceremonials relating to the Sabbath were appointed for the Jewish nation, and being peculiar to them, were abolished at the com-

mencement of the gospel dispensation, we maintain that the institution *itself* is to remain: that the Sabbath, as to the *essence* of it, being a due proportion of time consecrated to religion is of universal and perpetual obligation. The law respecting it is partly positive and partly moral: positive in respect to the time itself, but purely moral in regard to the purposes for which it is appointed: namely, to preserve alive in the world a sense of its maker, governor, and benefactor; to cherish in the minds of men just sentiments of their duty and their happiness, as reasonable immortal beings; and to prepare them for the spiritual and everlasting enjoyments of the world to come: which ends do not appear likely to have been so effectually answered by any occasional and merely voluntary services, in which it may be thought men might have engaged, without such a divine institution. I shall now lay before you some arguments to prove that there is such a divine institution, which was intended to be perpetual, and is obligatory upon mankind at large.—And here it is of importance to observe,

§ 1. *The peculiar Strefs which is laid, through all the Old Testament Writings, upon the Observation of the Sabbath above all other Mosaic Ceremonies.*

The manner in which it is enjoined in the fourth of the ten commandments, given on mount *Sinai*, is worthy of particular notice, and indicates something peculiarly important. The introduction is remarkably solemn. *Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.* The manner in which, and the reasons for which, that day was to be kept are very particularly mentioned; as also the persons by whom it was to be observed; amongst whom, it deserves special attention, were not only all the members of every Jewish family, but every *stranger within their gates*. The injunctions respecting the Sabbath we not only find often repeated in the books of Moses, but also in the writings of the prophets; where the religious observance of the day is frequently mentioned as of peculiar importance to the honour of God and the interest of religion, and as a decisive test of a truly pious character. Many special promises are

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made

made to encourage a due regard to this institution, as well as many awful threatenings denounced against the profanation of it. Remarkable in the former view is that passage, *Isaiah lvi. 2—7.* where, it is carefully to be observed, *other* persons besides the commonwealth of Israel are mentioned as highly interested. “ Blessed is the man that doeth  
 “ this, and the son of man that layeth hold  
 “ on it; that keepeth my Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing  
 “ evil. For thus saith the Lord unto the  
 “ *Eunuchs*\* that keep my Sabbaths, and  
 “ choose the things that please me, and that take  
 “ hold of my covenant, even them will I give  
 “ in my house and within my walls, a place  
 “ and a name better than of sons and of  
 “ daughters. I will give them an everlasting  
 “ name that shall not be cut off. Also the  
 “ sons of *strangers* that join themselves to the  
 “ Lord to serve him, and to love the name of  
 “ the Lord, to be his servants, every one that  
 “ keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and

\* As they were excluded from the congregation of Israel, it is supposed that this prophecy refers to gospel-times.

“ taketh



“ taketh hold of my covenant, even them will  
“ I bring to my holy mountains, and make  
“ them joyful in my house of prayer.” See  
also *Chap.* lviii. 13, 14 ; to which many other  
passages might be added, which shew the pe-  
culiar stress which was laid upon the strict  
observation of the Sabbath above the generality  
of the Mosaic rites and ceremonies ; which  
seems plainly to indicate, that there was  
something in this institution which distin-  
guished it from them, and gave it the pre-  
eminence above them, as more than a mere  
Jewish rite.

§ 2. *The religious Observation of the Sabbath  
was not peculiar to the Mosaic Economy.*

It is a matter of no small consideration,  
that the commandment given to the Jews  
respecting the sanctification of the Sabbath,  
is placed in the *decatalogue*, of which all the  
other precepts are *moral*, and universally  
binding ; which seems strongly to intimate,  
that, though something in this institution was  
positive and ceremonial, and therefore vari-  
able,



able, yet that the separation of certain times for religious purposes is of a moral nature and of general obligation.

It is worthy of special notice here, that the reason given in this fourth commandment for the sanctification of the seventh day as a day of rest, is such as was by no means peculiar to the Jews, but equally applies to all mankind, viz. God's having rested or ceased on that day from the work of creation; the commemoration of which great work was to be one worthy employment of the mind on that day, *Exod. xx. 4. Thou shalt not do any work, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, &c. and RESTED on the SEVENTH; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it.*

This is agreeable to, and fully confirms, the account given by Moses, in his history of the creation, which some have rejected as spurious. *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them, and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and God BLESSED the SEVENTH day and SANCTIFIED it, because that in it he had*  
*rested*

*rested from all his work which God created and made, Gen. ii. 3. \**

Now if the grand reason for setting apart a seventh day as a day of sacred rest was THAT here assigned, it is plain that the religious observation of it is a matter which concerns all mankind equally with the Jews, since mankind in all places and generations are equally interested in the contemplation of

\* Some have asserted both these passages to be interpolations; but they must *prove* them to be such before we can give up the argument grounded upon them, which we apprehend to be no easy matter. It has indeed been urged as a proof of the point that, in the repetition of the ten commandments in the book of *Deuteronomy*, v. 14, 15. the clause respecting the finishing of creation as the ground of the fourth commandment, is omitted; instead of which the deliverance from Egypt is introduced, and it is expressly said, "these words the Lord spake,—and he added no more." To which it may be answered, that there are several *other* variations in this copy of the ten commandments, and that the remembrance of the Egyptian deliverance is not inconsistent with the remembrance of the creation. As to the clause, *he added no more*, it does not stand in connexion with the fourth commandment, but at the close of the whole, v. 20. and evidently means that the Lord at that time gave no other commands.

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the works of God, and in the worship of him as the maker and the Lord of all. It deserves particular notice that the reason given in both the preceding passages for the sanctification of the Sabbath, is evidently alluded to by the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews*, Ch. iv. 4. *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, "and " God did rest the seventh day from all his " works,"* and v. 10. *For he that is entered into his rest, hath also ceased from his own works, AS GOD DID FROM HIS.* Whatever further meaning the apostle may be supposed to have had in this obscure passage, it plainly proves that, the words of Moses, as above quoted, were in HIS BIBLE, and shews the idea he entertained of the reason for which the Sabbath was instituted.—Another circumstance of peculiar weight in this argument is,

§ 3. *The Sabbath was an Institution which actually took Place before the Jewish Economy.*

It appears plain from the passage before quoted from the Mosaic account of the creation, that the Sabbath was instituted above two thousand

thousand years before the giving of the law by Moses, even from the beginning of the world. It is said *Gen. ii. 2, 3.* not merely that God himself rested from his work on the seventh day, but that for this reason *he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*: that is, set it apart from other days; consecrated it as a sacred festival, and gave it his benediction: appointed and promised his blessing to attend it as the means of important benefits to the children of men.

Some have supposed, that all which was meant by the words of Moses, when speaking of the finishing of creation, was that God *afterwards* appointed the Sabbath, which the Jews then actually observed, in commemoration of that event. But, not now to insist on the improbability of such a reason being given to one particular body of people, for enjoining on them such an institution, viz. an event which happened two thousand years before, in which all mankind were equally interested with them; it must be observed that we have *no other* account of its appointment. That it was not at the giving the *Law on Mount Sinai* that the Sabbath was instituted,



instituted, is plain from the words of the fourth commandment; which do not represent this as a *new* commandment, any more than any of the other nine. Every one must allow that *they* were all of them laws which the Israelites, in common with the rest of mankind, were bound to observe long before, even from the beginning. Nor is there any just reason for excepting *this*. It is indeed a remarkable circumstance, that this law of the Sabbath is more particularly distinguished as a law *already in force* than any of the rest. *Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.* The form of expression implies that it was an institution with which the Jews were well acquainted, and had been used to consider as divine; and they are here only called upon to recollect the nature, the origin, and the importance of it; to take heed that they did not forget the manner in which it should be kept, and the obligations they were under to keep it.

Accordingly we are plainly informed concerning the actual observation of the Sabbath before the giving of the ceremonial law. Not to lay any stress upon the account given us,



as some think, of the early commencement of public worship, after the birth of *Enos* to *Seth* the son of *Adam*, *Gen.* iv. 26. when it is said, *men began to call upon the name of the Lord*; I observe, we have positive evidence that a Sabbath was known and observed by the patriarchs, in the xvth chapter of *Exodus*, where we meet with a remarkable recognition of this institution as already appointed and observed, in the charge given to the Israelites in the wilderness, *before they came to Mount Sinai*, not to gather the manna on that day, and in the miraculous interposition of Providence to prevent such a profanation of it. *And he (Moses) said unto them, this is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the Rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: Bake that which ye bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe, and that which remaineth over lay up to be kept until the morning.* They accordingly did so. And the next day he said to them, *Eat that to-day, for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord. To-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days shall ye gather it, but on the seventh day which IS THE SABBATH, in it there shall be none, &c.* ver. 25—29. Here we plainly perceive

perceive that the Sabbath is not first instituted, but *recognized* as a divine appointment already well known, and heretofore religiously observed.—Thus then it is evident that this was not an institution peculiar to the Jewish œconomy, being appointed and observed before that took place, and of course is not to be understood as abrogated with it.—We now proceed to a more direct argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath, viz.

§ 4. *That the Observation of a seventh Day, as sacred to religious Uses, was general in the Christian Church from the earliest Times, and was sanctioned by Christ and his Apostles.*

Our blessed Lord not only constantly attended the worship of the temple on the Sabbath, and encouraged his disciples in doing the same, but he avoided every thing, in his language and conduct, which could be justly interpreted as a proof that he considered the Sabbath as a mere Jewish institution which was shortly to be abolished. It is true, he did many things himself, and countenanced his disciples in doing the same, which the pharisees

pharisees judged to be criminal, and for which they severely condemned both him and them. But it is observable that, though he freely rebuked those censorious and self-righteous men for their excessive rigour and superstition in their attention to the most trifling punctilios in the observation of the Sabbath, he never expressed himself as if he entertained low thoughts of the institution, nor gave them any intimation that it was to cease on the commencement of that new dispensation which he came to introduce ; but on the contrary, he argued with them on the supposition that their general notion of it, as a divine and perpetual institution, of universal obligation, was founded in truth. When he tells them, in answer to their cavils, *Mark ii. 27. The Sabbath was made for MAN, and not man for the Sabbath*, his words naturally convey the idea, that it was appointed not for the Jews only, but for mankind in general, and was equally binding upon his disciples. And the following words, *The Son of man is LORD also of the Sabbath*, strongly imply, that it was to continue under his *Lordship* or jurisdiction: that he adopted it as one of the institutions of his

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church,

church, though with such alterations as he thought proper to make in regard to the circumstantial of it.

It is also to be observed, that our blessed Lord in his various conversations with his disciples, either before his death or after his resurrection from the dead, never gave them the most distant hint that it was his design to abolish the Sabbath, as he most probably would have done if that had been the case. Nor do any of them ever express the smallest apprehension, after his ascension, that it was abrogated.

There is a passage in one of our Lord's discourses which contains strong positive proof that he considered the Sabbath as an ordinance to be continued after the Mosaic ceremonies were to be abolished. See *Matt. xxiv. 20.* where, predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, he advised those who should live to see that awful calamity, to pray, that their *flight might not be in the winter, nor on the SABBATH-DAY.* The period to which he referred, it is well known, was forty years after the time of his uttering the prediction; and if the Sabbath was to be observed till then, it is plain



plain it was not intended to be abolished by the gospel.

That the observation of the *seventh day* of the week as a Sabbath, very early ceased in the Christian church, is abundantly evident from the united testimony of the earliest Christian writers, and indeed from the New Testament itself; though *when* this alteration took place, and upon what *authority*, we are not expressly informed. It must be confessed somewhat extraordinary that the Gospel is totally silent on this head. But we have, I think, plain evidence from thence, and especially from the conduct of Christ and his apostles, after his resurrection, that the observation of a weekly Sabbath was continued, but that the day for the celebration of it was changed from the seventh to the *first* day of the week.

This change seems to have taken place in honour of that day on which the Redeemer rose, as a new and signal æra in the Christian church, and in commemoration of that most distinguished and important event,—that illustrious triumph of the glorious head of the church over the powers of darkness, whereby

he proved himself to be the *Son of God with power*: an event which may be considered as introductory to a *new creation*, far more glorious than the *first*, and which must therefore be allowed to be of magnitude sufficient to occasion such a change.

Though we have not explicit mention of the authority by which such a change took place, the evidence of the fact that the *first day* was religiously observed, seems plain from the following circumstances.

1. The disciples were assembled on the first day of the week, the day on which their Master arose; when he appeared to them, and gave them his benediction. One of their number, *Thomas*, was on some account absent on that occasion. But the next week, on the same day, they were all of them present, with the doors fastened for fear of the Jews. Then Jesus appeared amongst them again, and gave his unbelieving disciple *Thomas*, as well as the rest, the most indisputable and sensible evidence of his resurrection, *John* xx. 19—28.

2. From the subsequent history of the Christian church, it appears that the apostles, on the first day of the week, held religious assemblies

assemblies and engaged in all the several parts of religious and Christian worship. We are told, *Acts* xx. 7. that *on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread*, that is, to celebrate the Lord's supper, *Paul preached to them.*—And that it was the general practice of the apostles and the first Christians, to hold their religious assemblies on that day, is evident from Paul's exhortation to all the churches of *Galatia* and *Corinth*, to make their collections at that time for the relief of the poor. See *1 Cor.* xvi. 1, 2. *Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him.* How is it to be accounted for that these charitable collections should be ordered to be made on the *first* day of the week, rather than on any other day, but upon the supposition that this was the day on which their religious assemblies were held? If it should be objected, “that nothing is here said of making public collections, but only of *laying by* on the first day of the week, what could be spared for the poor,” it is answered, that there seems to be no reason for the advice to do this on the *first* day of the week, but upon the supposi-

tion that the money was on that day brought to the place of public meeting and there put into the church treasury, to be ready till the apostle came to receive it. This supposition is greatly favoured by the words as they stand in the original. *On the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by something, in proportion as he hath been prospered, TREASURING IT UP \** (viz. in the common stock) *that there may be no collections when I come.*

3. We find one day expressly distinguished by the name of the **LORD'S DAY**; which cannot be reasonably understood of any other than the first day of the week, which might with peculiar propriety be called the *Lord's*, in honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, who on that day arose from the dead; on which it is most likely the apostle *John*, then banished from the society of his fellow Christians, should have been favoured with that celestial vision which he relates, *Rev. i. 9, 10. I John, your companion in tribulation — in the isle that is called*

\* See Dr. Doddridge's note upon the place. See also Dr. Macknight, who translates the word *ἐνταπίζω* putting it into the Treasury.



*Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus, was in the Spirit on the LORD'S DAY, &c.* Which term, accordingly, it is well known, was afterwards used as the appropriate name of the Christian Sabbath; a day which all the writers of antiquity agree, was religiously observed from the earliest age of the church. Which well known fact might furnish a 4th argument for the continued observation of this day as a day of sacred rest. The writings of the FATHERS have been appealed to with respect to the "Early opinion of Christians concerning Jesus Christ," and certain other points of doctrine; and I know not why we may not with equal propriety appeal to them in favour of that Christian practice of which I am now treating.

It has been said, that some of those primitive writers strongly objected to the keeping the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, and expressly cautioned their readers against *Sabbatizing*. It is true, they did so, and so do we. But the very caution itself which those writers gave against *Judaizing* on the Christian Sabbath, supposes that such a day was observed in the church of Christ. And that this

was matter of fact, we have many unquestionable testimonies. But I shall wave this argument, as I wish to build only upon scripture authority, which I believe to be, in this, as in all other matters of faith and practice, abundantly sufficient.

## C H A P. II.

### OBJECTIONS *against the Perpetuity of the Sabbath answered.*

**S**TRONG as the arguments are in favour of the perpetuity of a Sabbath in the Christian church, it is a point which admits of objections \*, which are by no means trivial. These I now proceed to consider ; and I wish to do it with the utmost impartiality, persuaded that the cause of truth is in no danger of suffering by a free investigation.

\* Those who wish to see them stated in all their force, are referred to Mr. *Belsham's* Remarks on Mr. *Wilberforce's* Practical View, &c.

§ 1. *Objection 1. That the Observation of any particular Day as a Sabbath is not enjoined in the New Testament.*

“Where (it is asked) is a single passage to be found in that volume, which contains all the rules of Christian duty, wherein Christians are expressly commanded to keep any one day as sacred?” I readily confess there is none. But this I apprehend is no sufficient objection against the thing; and there are two considerations which may be sufficient to prove it.

The *first* is, that though we have no express precept for keeping a Sabbath under the gospel, we have what is nearly an equivalent. Such seems to be the example of Christ, and his apostles, and the first Christians, which hath been already mentioned: their holding their religious assemblies on the first day of the week, for preaching and breaking of bread, when the chief prayers and praises of the church were offered, and their collections were made for the poor. Such examples, taken in connexion with the known practice of Christians in the times immediate succeeding,

26 *Objections against the Perpetuity*

ceeding, might be admitted as a sufficient warrant for our meeting on this day for the purposes of religious worship, which we allow to be the chief end for distinguishing this from the other days of the week.

If it should be said, this does not amount to the idea of a *Sabbath*, on which it is supposed the common employments of other days are unlawful : I answer, that our Lord himself (as before remarked) strongly countenanced such a sanctification or separation of this day from all others, in those very discourses of his with the Pharisees, in which he censures them for their superstition and excessive rigour. And further, it doth not appear that Christ or his apostles engaged in any secular employments on the Sabbath, but what necessity or mercy required. But the principal and most satisfactory answer to the objection is,

*Secondly*, that there was *no need* of a positive command in this case, since the Sabbath was already instituted, and universally acknowledged, as a divine appointment ; and that not for the Jews only, but (as we have seen) for all mankind ; having been not only in-

serted



serted among the ten commandments of the moral law, but instituted and observed before that law was given, even from the beginning of the world. For these reasons, it was natural for Christians to consider the original law of the Sabbath as still in force, unless it had been expressly repealed. On this head the able and learned Dr. *Chandler* thus writes.

“ It is an objection scarcely worth taking  
“ notice of, that there is no express pre-  
“ cept in the writings of the New Testa-  
“ ment, to enjoin the observation of the  
“ Lord’s day. It will abundantly obviate  
“ the objection to observe, that there was no  
“ manner of need of it; and that if Chris-  
“ tianity doth *not abrogate* the observation of  
“ it, *it enjoins it*. The gospel disannuls only  
“ what was peculiar to the Jews, but nothing  
“ that was appointed of God for the universal  
“ observation of mankind from the beginning  
“ of the world. The sanctification of the  
“ Sabbath, or *first day of the week* \*, was  
“ immediately

\* This learned author supposes, that the day originally appointed for the Sabbath, was the first complete day of Adam’s life, and the very same day of the week  
with

“ immediately proclaimed upon the finishing  
 “ of the creation, for moral ends and pur-  
 “ poses, and therefore can never be dispensed  
 “ with, whilst the reason for its observation  
 “ remains; or at least till it be expressly  
 “ repealed by the same high and supreme  
 “ authority that enacted it. And the only  
 “ inference that can be made from the abro-  
 “ gation of the *Jewish Sabbath* (which was  
 “ the *seventh* day of the week, and appointed  
 “ the Jews, as a mark of distinction from  
 “ all other nations) is this: that when that  
 “ distinction was for ever to cease, the ori-  
 “ ginal day (the first day of the natural week,  
 “ which from the creation God sanctified for  
 “ the common observation of all men) should  
 “ resume its place, and again become the  
 “ festival of the world, in which all nations,  
 “ tongues, and languages, should unite in  
 “ paying their solemn adoration to the one

with that on which Christ arose from the dead, which  
 Christians afterwards observed as their Sabbath; and  
 that it had been altered to the *seventh day* for the Jews  
 only, in commemoration of their deliverance from  
 Egypt, which may account for that event being so often  
 mentioned in connexion with the Sabbath.

“ God,

“ God, the creator of all things, and the  
 “ Redeemer of the world by his only Son,  
 “ Christ Jesus our Lord\*.”—But another,  
 and apparently a more formidable objection is  
 the following.

§ 2. *Objection 2. That there are several  
 Passages in the New Testament, in which the  
 Sabbath is mentioned as being actually abolished  
 by the Gospel, with other Jewish Ceremonies.*

In this view that passage is produced.  
*Col. ii. 16, &c. Let no man therefore judge you in  
 meat or drink, or in respect to a holy day, or of  
 the new moons, or of the Sabbath-days, which  
 are a shadow of things to come, but the body (or  
 substance) is Christ.*—From this passage it is  
 indeed plain, that the peculiar institutions of  
 the Jewish law were intended to be superseded  
 and abolished by Christianity, which is the  
 substance of those things of which they were  
 the shadows. And among these, we are  
 doubtless to include those circumstances rela-  
 tive to the Sabbath which were purely Jewish.

\* Chandler's two Sermons on the Sabbath, p. 47.

and

and ceremonial, especially the particular day of the week, the Jews being strictly obliged to keep the *seventh*, as also the rigorous observances with which they were bound to keep it. But this text by no means asserts, or necessarily implies, that the gospel has abolished the observation of one day in the week as a religious festival. It should be observed, the word rendered *Sabbath-days*, only signifies *Sabbaths*, and is sometimes applied to other sabbatical seasons, and to festivals in general, of which the Jews had several; so that the weekly day of rest, which was *not first* appointed for *them*, might not be particularly intended. But admitting this to be included, the apostle might only intend the abolition of the *seventh day*, to which the Jewish converts were particularly attached, and the *ritual* observances of it, which might properly be reckoned among the *shadows* of the Mosaic dispensation. And if the arguments which have been before adduced for the perpetuity of a weekly day of sacred rest and devotion are of any validity, this passage must be interpreted with some such limitation, as it usually



usually has been\*, and certainly may be without any violence.

Another text which has been produced, and upon which great stress has been laid, to prove that Christians are under no obligations to keep any day as sacred, is *Rom. xiv. 4, &c.* in which it is said, the apostle, though he does not prohibit the observation of such a day, by those who chose to keep it, yet reproves those that censured their brethren who were differently minded, because the gospel left them at full liberty to use their own discretion. The apostle's words are these. *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. One man esteemeth one day above another. Another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.*

But it is by no means certain that the apostle was speaking of the weekly sabbath. The term used in the original is not *the day*, but a

\* See Doddridge and Macknight upon the place.

day;

day ; and it is easy to suppose that he might refer only to the other festivals of the Jews ; or at most to the *seventh-day* Sabbath, for the strict observance of which many of them still earnestly contended, as they did for circumcision and other Mosaic ceremonies which the apostle here mentions, particularly the abstaining from certain kinds of food ; in respect to all which they were at liberty to act according to their own judgments and consciences.

Upon an attentive consideration of this passage, it appears to me so far from affording any proof that a Sabbath is abolished by the gospel, that it contains a strong argument to the contrary. For if the observation of a weekly day of rest and devotion had really been abrogated by Christianity, and no other day was appointed in the room of the seventh, this apostle must certainly have known it ; and in that case he would not have mentioned it as a matter of *indifference* whether they kept the day or not, but he would have told them expressly that under the gospel dispensation *no day* ought to be kept as a Sabbath.— It is further urged,

§ 3. *Objection 3. That Christians ought to keep every Day as a Sabbath, by spending every Day in a holy Manner.*

This is undoubtedly true; and so ought the Jews of old to have done. But to speak thus in discussing the present point is trifling, and playing upon words. The question is,—Whether there be not one day in the week to be distinguished under the Christian dispensation, as there was under the law, from the other six days, by being peculiarly consecrated to religious purposes? Now the spending every day in a holy manner is certainly no way inconsistent with, and therefore no objection to, the distinguishing every *seventh day* as a day of sacred rest and peculiar devotion. If there were any thing valid in the argument, it would prove too much; namely, that no one day is to be distinguished by any acts of public worship; for our opponents allow the propriety of public exercises of devotion and religious instruction, but I suppose they would not in general plead for such services every day in the week. I further observe, that we apprehend the grand design and tendency of

D                      sanctifying

sanctifying one day in the week as a Sabbath, is not to *prevent*, but to *engage* men to live holily every day. And I cannot perceive that they who keep the Sabbath in the strictest manner, keep other days worse than they who have utterly discarded it.

It has been urged, that great strictness in respect to ceremonies and external observances, has a tendency to lessen the regard which is due to matters of greater importance; as was manifestly the case with the Jews of old, who while they were punctual and zealous in keeping holy days, as well as other rites, *neglected the weightier matters of the Law, justice, mercy, and fidelity*. This was undoubtedly matter of fact among that people, and especially the Pharisees, whom on this account our Saviour frequently and severely censures. And it is readily confessed that in our own times a similar disposition is observable. Persons who are the most rigorous in little punctilios respecting the externals of religion, and the positive institutions of it, are in general proportionably negligent about moral duties.

But



But this is no just objection against the things themselves: it is only an argument for caution against a Pharisaical scrupulosity. That there are positive institutions enjoined by the gospel, is what our opponents in general allow, *e. g.* Baptism, and the Lord's Supper; and certainly nothing has been more grossly abused by superstitious people than these. But with what propriety could such abuses be urged for the abolition of these rites? The same may be said with respect to the sanctification of the Sabbath. The original appointment of this day was intended to subserve the most important practical purposes; and if men had attended to the laws of God respecting it, those purposes would have been universally answered; and so they would still. A right observation of the Sabbath, such as that for which I am pleading, considered as a divine institution of a day of sacred rest, and of religious exercise, is certainly no impossible thing, nor is any thing superstitious necessarily connected with the idea. And I must maintain that the Sabbath thus observed, conformably to the original design of the great law-giver, has the most

direct tendency to promote the cause of virtue and piety in the world : to impress and retain upon the minds of men a sense of the being, perfections, and works of God ; to affect them with a due apprehension of all moral obligations, and to promote the practice of every duty, personal and social, as well as divine ; which is indeed no weak presumptive argument in favour of the perpetuity of the Sabbath.

For the truth of what I have asserted concerning the practical and useful tendency of this institution, I may appeal to facts, which have fallen under your own observation, and which have been noticed and acknowledged by multitudes. Those in general have been found the best Christians, and the best members of civil society, who have been the most strict and conscientious in sanctifying the Sabbath. Whereas, on the other hand, the most irreligious and immoral characters are found among those who entertain the lowest notion of this institution, and who have been accustomed to the greatest liberty in the manner of spending this day. Every one knows that amongst the multitudes of unhappy creatures

tures who have come to the most ignominious end, a vast number have confessed, at the place of execution, that all their vices and their consequent misery originated in *Sabbath-breaking*, against which evil they have most pathetically warned the spectators of their awful fate.

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## C H A P. III.

*Of the Manner in which the Christian Sabbath should be kept.*

I N determining how Christians should spend the Sabbath, I apprehend we are to be guided in our inquiries, not by the positive and peculiar injunctions and prohibitions of the Mosaic law, which were given only to the Jewish people, and therefore are abolished by the gospel; but by the original law of the Sabbath, given at the creation of the world, and the moral use and design of the institution therein expressed, in connexion with the *spirit*

and genius of Christianity, which is the law of liberty: a spiritual dispensation.

The Jewish law indeed was not so rigorous as the Pharisees interpreted it, so as to prohibit works of necessity and mercy. Yet it was so strict as to be one of those *burdens* which the Jews were averse to bear. In the wilderness they were not suffered to gather or prepare their food on the Sabbath. And afterwards when Moses gave the orders respecting the building of the tabernacle, he absolutely prohibited, not only their doing any thing towards even that sacred work, but so much as *kindling a fire in their habitations* on that day, upon pain of DEATH. We meet with an instance of a man's being adjudged to be stoned for violating the law by gathering sticks on the Sabbath. *Numb. xv. 31.*—But the Jewish Sabbath was not merely a day of rest, it was also a day of extraordinary worship and sacrifice. It is called *an holy convocation*. Besides the public prayers and praises which were offered, and the reading of the Law, which took up a large portion of time, the ritual directs for the proper sabbatical service, two lambs for a sacrifice over and above the



two appointed for the daily service ; and the meat-offering for the Sabbath is directed to be double the meat-offering of every day. See *Numb.* xxviii. 9, 10. The sabbatical service was also distinguished by the offering of the shew-bread. *Lev.* xxiv. 6—9.

Thus troublesome and expensive were the rites by which the Jewish Sabbath was distinguished. Now all these are abolished by Jesus Christ, who tells us, *his yoke is easy and his burden light*. Nor can it be justly thought at all inconsistent with this, that he should be supposed to require of his disciples the observation of the original Sabbath, as a day of rest and extraordinary devotion, so kept as to answer all the grand moral purposes of the institution, and in that spirit of cheerfulness and liberality which is countenanced by the mild and benevolent constitution of the gospel.

Having premised thus much concerning the nature of the Christian Sabbath, as distinguished from the Jewish, I now proceed more particularly to shew what is required and what is forbidden on this day.

§ 1. *What is required of Christians on the Lord's Day.*

The grand distinguishing employment of this day, which first presents itself to our thoughts is, the celebration of the public worship of God.—When God had finished his work of creation in six days, and rested on the seventh, *he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*, or set it apart from other days, to a sacred use. What that general use was, we easily learn from the occasion of this separation; namely, the remembrance of God as the creator of the universe, and the commemoration of this his stupendous work; which involves in it the idea of paying him correspondent acts of homage, or worshipping him as the maker and Lord of Heaven and earth.

“ There was nothing (says the above able  
 “ writer) that could be of greater importance  
 “ to mankind than to keep up this sentiment  
 “ among them, that the world was not eter-  
 “ nal, but the workmanship of God; and  
 “ the not attending to this gave rise to what  
 “ was the ancient and original idolatry of  
 “ mankind,

“ mankind, the worship of the sun, moon,  
 “ and stars, and the principal powers of  
 “ nature ; an idolatry which could scarcely  
 “ ever have taken place, had it been well  
 “ known and generally believed that they  
 “ were all of them the mere creatures of  
 “ one eternal almighty and infinitely wise  
 “ creator\*.”—Now the observation of the  
 Sabbath, in social and public acts of worship,  
 is well adapted to preserve alive in the minds  
 of men a reverential and grateful regard to  
 the Almighty as the creator of all things, and  
 as our creator.

But we Christians are called to contemplate  
 him under a more glorious and pleasing cha-  
 racter ; viz. as the Redeemer and Saviour of  
 men ; as the author of a *new creation* by Jesus  
 Christ, who on the first day of the week was  
 raised from the dead, and who thus confirmed  
 our faith in him and our expectations from  
 him. What can be more fit and reasonable  
 than that we who are taught to entertain such  
 high and pleasing ideas of God, should con-  
 secrate set times and seasons for the remem-

\* Dr. Chandler ubi supra.

brance of him, for paying him our united homage, and expressing our sense of dependence upon him and obligations to him? for attending to the intimations of his will concerning us given in his word, and promoting his knowledge, worship, and service in the world, which without such public acts of religion would be quickly lost.

That the social and public worship of God is not only a reasonable and beneficial service, but an indispensable duty in all ages, is sufficiently clear from the scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. This I shall now take for granted. The subject has lately been thoroughly canvassed, and in my apprehension, the controversy completely decided\*. Now if public worship, including prayer, praise, and hearing the word of God, be a Christian duty, the Sabbath is doubtless the fittest time for it. It may indeed be lawfully performed on other days; but this is the fittest to be the season for the general body of Christians to

\* See among many publications on the subject of public worship, one by *Mr. Parry*, who has placed the arguments for it, from the New Testament, in a clear and convincing point of light.



unite in this service, as it is necessary for them to do, in order to answer the great ends of public worship. And the wisdom and goodness of God are manifest in having appointed periodical seasons, in which considerable numbers can meet together in their father's house, without interruption from their worldly affairs; so as to animate each other's devotion and zeal, and cherish those social affections which are so eminently congenial to the spirit of the gospel.

But with those who acknowledge the propriety and utility of the public worship of God on the Lord's day, a question may arise—How *often* ought divine worship to be attended? On this head different persons will judge differently. We have no certain and universal rule to determine us, since we have no positive command. It cannot, however, with any shadow of reason be questioned whether it be the duty of all persons who have ability and opportunity, that is to say, all who are in health, and who have no necessary hindrance, to attend divine worship every Sabbath. But how many times on that day every such person is in duty bound to frequent the

the house of God, none have authority to pronounce, and every one must be left to act according to his own judgment and conscience. But thus much must be said, that it is the duty of all to attend the public worship of God as often as his ability both of body and mind will permit, consistently with *other duties*: for other duties there certainly are (though many seem not to be aware of it) to be attended to on the Sabbath, as well as this, of equal importance: and no one duty ought to interfere with another.

Nature and reason seem to concur with the example of God's people of old, in recommending both *the Morning and Evening sacrifice*. And surely where the services are not long, the time employed in *two* of them, which together make but one *fourth part* of the whole day, of twelve hours, cannot reasonably be deemed too large a proportion of it.

To some persons, doubtless, who are either aged or infirm, one public service is as much as they are generally equal to, especially in some seasons of the year; and to attempt more would defeat the end of all. But for young people, and those in full health and vigour,

vigour, who live near to a place of worship, to content themselves with one religious service, of an hour and a half, under a pretence “ of inability to keep their attention longer “ fixed, and the necessity of relaxation,” appears totally inexcusable, and indeed highly ludicrous; especially considering that the same persons, or others of the same description, can several times in a week keep their attention fixed in a fashionable game, or in a place of public amusement, for double the length of time; and perhaps can wait with patience in a crowded assembly before the entertainment begins, longer than the whole time usually spent in public worship, with every accommodation. It may fairly be concluded of such persons that they want inclination more than ability for the sacred exercises of devotion, being *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*

And those persons in general who usually spend the greater part of the Lord's day in mere indolence and bodily indulgences, pour such contempt on God's word and ordinances, as plainly shews that their partial attendance on divine worship proceeds from no proper motive, and is unlikely to do them any real good.

good. It may surely be affirmed that where the heart is right with God, and there is an earnest desire to have the soul improved in knowledge and holiness, the public ordinances of religion will be valued more than any worldly enjoyments; and they that prize them as they ought, will esteem it not merely their *duty* but their *privilege* to attend upon them. They will cordially adopt the language of the pious psalmist, *How amiable are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.* Where this is the case there will be no inclination to seek or admit of any excuse for frequent absence from the house of God, but there will be a desire and a contrivance to be constant in attending upon the ordinance of it\*. Such persons will esteem it *a good thing* to give thanks unto the Lord, and will delight both

\* It must be added, that the same devout principle may be expected to induce the worshippers of God to unite in the *whole* public service, and to be present at the beginning of it. The common practice of coming in after a part of the worship is over, is a shameful irregularity, which admits of no excuse, and seems to indicate a want of due reverence for God, and of an ardent delight in the exercises of devotion. See *Psalms* lxiii.

morning



*morning and evening* to hear and to speak of his wonderful works.

But the public worship of God, important and delightful as it is, ought not to occupy the whole of this sacred day; nor indeed, usually, the greater part of it.

I shall now therefore proceed to shew, how the remaining hours of the day should be spent. And here I would premise, that we ought to guard against the two extremes of excessive laxness on the one hand, and excessive rigour on the other, remembering that we *are not under the law, but under grace.*—It is confessed that we have no express precepts in scripture to direct us how every hour of the Sabbath should be employed; nor do we need any. It is enough that we are there taught what is the great end of our being: what the happiness for which we are created, and what is necessary to fit us for the enjoyment of it: That we are instructed concerning the nature and perfections of God; the general duties we owe him; the necessity of maintaining intercourse with him, and the importance of a growing conformity to the image of his moral attributes. A due attention to these particulars

particulars will be sufficient to direct us to our duty in matters about which we have no positive written rules, and among others in that now under consideration. If we keep in view the great ends of the Sabbath, as an institution designed for our religious improvement ; to promote our advancement in divine knowledge, and in all the branches of virtue and goodness, as the means of fitting us for heaven, we shall easily perceive in what manner this day may be most profitably spent ; and if we are truly disposed to improve it to the best purposes we shall find business enough to employ the whole of it.

On these principles it will appear that to waste any part of it in sloth and indolence is highly criminal, and indeed more inconsistent with the great design of it than engaging in our honest secular callings—Which reminds me of the great impropriety of indulging in SLEEP more on this day than on any other : a practice not uncommon even among the professors of religion. Many persons who rise early every other day in the week to pursue the labours of their respective callings, seem as if they thought the chief use of the Sabbath

was

was to give rest to their bodies, by indulging them some hours longer than ordinary in bed ; in consequence of which they are unable to get ready for the public worship of the morning, and thus are either detained from it, or not present till a part of it is over. No longer time can warrantably be allowed in sleep on this day than is necessary to the comfortable discharge of the religious duties of it ; in all of which it behoves us to be  *fervent in spirit serving the Lord.*

Besides those of the *sanctuary*, already considered, there are those of the *closet* and of the *family*, which equally call for our attention.—As to the former : if the private exercises of devotion demand some part of every day, it seems reasonable that a larger proportion of our time should be devoted to them on the Lord's day, which usually affords more leisure for them. In the morning, solemn acts of prayer and meditation will be particularly useful to divest our minds of earthly cares, and prepare them for the public services of God's house. And in the evening the like exercises will be highly beneficial for fixing what we have heard in our memories, and

E                      strengthening

strengthening the impression of them upon our hearts.—Reading and studying the holy scriptures also, with other books of divinity, will be a profitable employment of some considerable portion of our sacred time ; which those persons more especially should be careful to improve for this purpose, who in consequence of a multiplicity of business and connexions in the world, can on other days command but little leisure for it.

That FAMILY-WORSHIP and INSTRUCTION are duties of high importance, I shall not attempt to prove. It is not to be conceived that any one who possesses a principle of religion himself can be indifferent to the spiritual welfare of others, especially of his domestics and of the rising generation. Like faithful Abraham, whom the Almighty so highly applauded, he will *command his children and household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord*. This pious care should more or less be exercised by Christian parents and masters every day. But the Lord's day affords peculiar opportunity for it. The several members of families may then generally be most easily convened. Time may in common  
be



be most easily secured. And the interruptions to which most families are on other days liable, may on this, with a little resolution, be most easily avoided. The subjects of public discourse also may be of special use to furnish matter for inquiry, admonition, and prayer.

Domestic employments of this nature are of such vast importance to the young, and may be attended to with such peculiar advantage on the Evening of the Sabbath, that nothing should be tolerated in a Christian family that is inconsistent with them.—For this reason the common practice of paying ceremonious visits on the Lord's day is to be discountenanced. Though it cannot be justly pronounced criminal so far to shew hospitality on this day as to entertain a friend, especially one from a distance, the less company we admit, and the less festivity we indulge, the better. And care should be taken that the social intercourse of friends and relations be not protracted to an unseasonable length, so as to infringe upon the religious orders of the family. Other and more gross abuses of the Sabbath will be considered in

the next Section.—It may be proper to add here, that such as have time to spare from their own personal and domestic concerns, would employ it well in visiting SUNDAY-SCHOOLS, and instructing the children of the poor, of whom there are great numbers who need and are disposed to receive their aid. Such Sunday-visits will turn to good account.

§ 2. *What is unlawful or inexpedient to be done on the Sabbath.*

There is nothing in reason or scripture which leads us to conclude, that every moment of the Lord's day must necessarily be spent in religious exercises, or that it is criminal to speak or to do any thing but what is purely religious and spiritual. As the body must be refreshed, so the mind must be relaxed. And such refreshments and relaxations as fit us for engaging in the sacred exercises of devotion with the greater vigour, pleasure, and success, are not only lawful but useful and commendable. In this view cheerful conversation with our families and friends in the intervals of religious duties, or a walk in the garden,

garden, or any other retired place, may be mentioned as both innocent and laudable.

Our blessed Lord severely rebuked the Pharisees for their censorious reflections on his disciples, for plucking a few ears of grain, as they walked through the corn-fields, and for rubbing off the chaff in their hands; telling them that, if they had known the meaning of that passage in their scriptures, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," they *would not have condemned the guiltless*. Matt. xii. 7. And he mentions several cases in point to exculpate them. On various other occasions also he expressed himself in such a manner concerning positive institutions, as to countenance his followers in the exercise of all that liberty which is consistent with a due regard to their grand moral uses\*.

But no further indulgences than such as the infirmities of our nature require, or than what are subservient to the religious purposes of the Sabbath, seem to be allowable; much less such as directly tend to defeat them. These may be comprehended under these two particulars—worldly business,—and carnal re-

\* See Mark ii. 23—28. iii. 1—5. &c.

creations. Both these have generally been considered by serious Christians as unlawful on the Sabbath ; and that they are so I shall now endeavour to prove.

None will dispute that they were both absolutely forbidden to the Jews ; it is therefore needless to produce particular passages from the writings of the Old Testament to this purpose. I will only quote one (before alluded to) from the prophecy of *Isaiab*, Ch. lviii. 13, 14. *If thou call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shall honour him, not doing thine own ways (or WORKS) nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord, &c.*—Will any one say that such passages as this concerned the *Jews only*, because we have no similar ones in the New Testament ? The proper answer seems to be this : As the Sabbath was not instituted for the Jews alone, so the injunctions given them respecting it are not ALL peculiar to *them*. Though some of them doubtless are so, others are equally applicable to all mankind. It is asked, How are we to distinguish between the one and the other ? I answer,—the precepts and prohibitions



prohibitions which are of general application, may easily be discerned by their correspondence with the original reason and the grand moral design of the institution, as already stated. In order to form a just judgment in this case, we must exercise our own understandings; to which it is presumed they who plead the most strenuously for the use of REASON in religion will make no objection. Whatever right reason teaches to be injurious to the mind, or conducive to its best improvement, must be allowed to have the force of a Law, and to be binding upon conscience. On this principle I shall now proceed to shew that those passages in the Old Testament which forbid worldly business and entertainments on the Sabbath are to be considered as prohibitions to Christians.

*First*, as to WORLDLY BUSINESS; or engaging in our secular callings. This appears to be unlawful on the Sabbath, because it is unsuitable to the nature and design of it. A cessation from labour is what the fourth commandment most expressly requires: *Thou shalt do no manner of work, &c.* and the reason given, namely God's having rested after the

finishing of creation, proves it to be (as has before been shewn) universally binding. And that we should consider it as binding upon ourselves, so as entirely to lay aside our secular concerns, appears most highly reasonable from reflecting on the injurious consequence which would ensue from a contrary conduct. For if persons were to consider themselves as being at liberty on the Lord's day to open their shops, and pursue their several branches of business as on other days, it would almost totally defeat the great ends of a Sabbath, being incompatible with such a general attendance upon the public worship of God as would answer the purposes for which it is performed; as well as greatly interrupt the retired exercises of religion.—And the same argument is in a considerable degree applicable to the transaction of worldly business in *private*. True wisdom, and a due regard to our best interests, will teach us the propriety of having as little to do as possible on the Lord's day, in things which merely concern the body and the present life, for which six days, well employed, will be abundantly sufficient.

It

It must be added here; that, while we refrain from *our own* secular employments on the Sabbath, we ought to be careful not to require other persons to engage in theirs, nor to lay them under any temptation to do it, especially so as to hinder their attendance on the worship of God.—It is much to be lamented that many persons who are strict in abstaining from secular employments on the Sabbath themselves, yet employ their servants and certain classes of tradesmen in such branches of their business (*v. g.* in adorning their persons, or providing their food, or selling them provisions) as to detain them from the house of God, and deprive them of almost all the opportunity they have for attending to their spiritual interests. This surely, in the professors of religion, is a flagrant inconsistency.

Another common evil, which ought to be avoided by all who profess to sanctify the Sabbath is, TRAVELLING on that day. This is as inconsistent with the great ends of the institution, as any other secular business. And it is attended with the great evil which was last specified, obliging other persons to exercise

cise their trades ; I mean masters and servants of Inns ; who by the commonness of this practice are almost entirely kept from the public worship of God, and obliged in a manner to live like heathens.—Some perhaps may plead “ that they travel but seldom on the Sabbath, and then only when they are in particular haste : ” as also, “ that the same persons would be equally detained from divine worship whether they themselves employed them or not. ” And some probably may urge “ that their own time is not wholly mis-spent while on the road, as they have their thoughts to themselves, and in a carriage can profitably employ themselves in reading. ” To all which I answer,—that a Christian should not unnecessarily do that at any time which it would be wrong to do often : that he ought not to give his countenance to any crime in others, though he is unable to prevent it ; that he should *abstain from the appearance of evil*, and take great care lest by his example he encourage that in other persons which is generally evil and pernicious, as journies of pleasure or of business on this day certainly are. Not to insist upon the injustice hereby done to  
*the*



*the cattle*, for whose rest the merciful Creator has provided, in the law of the Sabbath, as well as for that of menial servants.—There may indeed be cases wherein travelling on the Sabbath (as well as other secular employments) may be lawful; namely when works of mercy or necessity require it; for our Saviour himself has taught us that *it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day*. But all persons professing religion should take care that they do not unnecessarily avail themselves of such an indulgence, and especially during the time of divine service. It is better to practise some little self-denial, or submit to some additional expence, than to seem to make light of divine institutions, and thus sanction the neglect of them.

It must here be further observed, that it behoves those who profess a religious regard to the Sabbath, to take heed that they do not unnecessarily break in upon their sacred time by going to a greater distance than is needful even *to attend divine worship*. It is to be lamented that many who have the gospel nigh them spend several hours on the Lord's day in travelling to distant places to hear some celebrated

brated preacher, and often to indulge a vain curiosity in seeking after novelties, to the neglect of their families, and the private exercises of religion. Such persons may properly be said to *do their own works* and *seek their own pleasure*, rather than God's glory, or their spiritual profit.

*Secondly*, The other profanation of the Sabbath which I mentioned is, sensual PLEASURE.

With many persons the day of God, instead of being kept as a *holy day*, is converted into what, by a change of pronounciation, is commonly called a *holiday*. In some foreign countries diversions of all kinds are pursued with more eagerness by people of all ranks on the Sabbath than upon any other day of the week; though *there* the generality think themselves bound first to attend upon public worship; after which they consider all the time as their own, and think they have a full licence to indulge themselves in all sorts of amusements. It is lamentable that the same profaneness has been introduced into our own country, and by many of the higher ranks is carried even to a greater excess, though with less

less inconsistency ; for they attend no place of worship, but devote the whole day to dissipation. Though the play-houses are not open, they have substitutes for them in private circles, in routs, cards, and concerts.—Nor are the lower classes of people, especially in and near the metropolis and the larger towns, more scrupulous in the pursuit of such gratifications as are suited to their tastes.—And though some retain so much sense of decency as ordinarily to frequent their church on the morning of the Sabbath, they consider their duty as then done, and think themselves at liberty to spend the remainder of the day in festivity or mere amusement ; and not a few in places of public resort\*.

These are growing evils, against which it becomes the professors and ministers of religion to bear their testimony, as being of the most injurious tendency. The effect of these pleasures which are pursued on the Sabbath, is not the mere loss of that time and substance

\* Sunday-Ordinaries, Tea-Gardens, &c. which are crowded on the Sabbath, while places of worship are thinly attended. In the city of London most of the parish churches are in the afternoon almost deserted.

which

which might be employed to far better purpose; but the occasion of such a woful dissipation of mind as is inconsistent with all religion, and as indisposes it for attending to any thing serious and useful. Accordingly it is found that those persons who have habituated themselves to scenes of mirth and festivity on the Lord's-day, do generally in a little time throw off all pretensions to religion, and utterly forsake those places of worship where they would hear such things as would make their consciences uneasy and spoil their pleasures.

And as to those who through the force of education or habit, or merely to pacify their consciences, continue one part of the Lord's day to attend the public worship of God, the scenes of amusement in which the rest of the day is spent (though of the more decent kind) have a direct tendency to banish reflection, and to efface any serious impressions which have been made upon the mind in hearing the word of God; and thus the great purposes for which divine institutions were appointed are almost totally frustrated. Hence appears the unlawfulness of all such recreations on the



the Sabbath; from which therefore all who regard their eternal interests are solemnly admonished to abstain, and which all that have any concern for the cause of religion in the world are exhorted to discountenance as far as their influence extends.

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#### CH A P. IV.

*The Conclusion: a serious Expostulation on the Subject.*

THE manner of spending the Sabbath which has been recommended in the foregoing pages, will doubtless be objected to by some readers as unreasonably strict, and intolerably burdensome. But who are they? Not such as have a true relish for what is spiritual and divine, or who have a due regard to their own best interests. They will, with the pious Psalmist, esteem *one day* thus employed *better than a thousand* spent in the *tents of wickedness*, or in the most innocent earthly pursuits

puruits or enjoyments. They will “ welcome this sweet day of rest,” and regret when it is over. Those whose minds are wholly carnal and sensual will naturally protest against so much strictness ; and such as live in families where it is required, will be ready to exclaim with those of old time, *What a weariness is it ! When will the Sabbath be gone ?*——“ We have  
“ had occasion often to remark, that many  
“ persons of the graver and more decent sort  
“ seem not seldom to be destitute of religious  
“ resources. The Sunday is with them, to  
“ say the best of it, a *heavy* day ; and that  
“ larger part of it which is not claimed by  
“ the public offices of the church, dully  
“ drawls on in comfortless vacuity, or with-  
“ out improvement is trifled away in vain  
“ unprofitable discourse.—How little do many  
“ seem to enter into the *spirit* of the institu-  
“ tion, who are not wholly inattentive to its  
“ exterior decorum ! How hardly do they  
“ plead against being [required] to devote the  
“ *whole* of the day to Religion, claiming to  
“ themselves no small merit for giving up to  
“ it a part, and purchasing therefore, as they  
“ hope, a right to spend the remainder more  
“ agreeably !

“ agreeably ! How dexterously do they avail  
“ themselves of any plausible plea for intro-  
“ ducing some week-day employment into  
“ the Sunday, while they have not the same  
“ propensity to introduce any of the Sunday’s  
“ peculiar employment into the rest of the  
“ week ! How often do they find excuses for  
“ taking journies, writing letters, balancing  
“ accounts ; or in short doing something,  
“ which by a little management might pro-  
“ perly have been anticipated, or which  
“ without any material inconvenience, might  
“ be postponed ! Even business itself is re-  
“ creation, compared with religion, and from  
“ the drudgery of this day of sacred rest  
“ they fly for relief to their ordinary occu-  
“ pations\*.”

Persons of this description plainly discover that they *favour not the things which be of God*. And shall Christians apologize for them, or attempt to soften down the law of God†, to accommodate it to their depraved taste ?

\* Wilberforce’s *Practical View*, p. 196, 4th edit.

† No uncandid reflection is here intended on any who may in their judgments be convinced, upon an

taste? or relax their own conduct to avoid giving them disgust? This would be an unworthy, and indeed a fruitless, attempt. Let us rather represent the divine institutions as they are, and endeavour to display their wisdom and excellence by a strict conformity to them.

It doubtless becomes all the true friends to piety, who wish to promote the honour and interest of their religion in the world, to avoid all appearance of a pharisaical scrupulosity; every degree of moroseness in their tempers, and all kinds of harshness and severity in their conduct towards those about them, on this day as well as every other. And I would here enter a serious caution to

impartial inquiry, that the Sabbath is repealed by the gospel, and who really make *every day a Sabbath*! Such persons, if such there be, will by no means countenance the indevout temper censured above, but will lament the appearance of it on *any* day. It behoves them, however, to consider, whether their own principles, when avowed and defended, have not a tendency to promote it; and to guard against such a mode of opposing the common opinion concerning the Sabbath, as irreligious persons will avail themselves of to exculpate themselves in their impiety.

all



all the pious heads of families against making the services of the Sabbath unnecessarily burdensome to any under their roof, especially to children, who have too often imbibed an unhappy prejudice against religion through the excessive rigour of pious parents and masters, who have not made sufficient allowance for the vivacity of youth. It is unwise and injurious to keep their minds perpetually on the stretch, by forcing them to spend every moment of the Sabbath in hearing, reading, and prayer. *Christ's yoke is easy and his burden light*; and they do him and their families a great injury who make it heavy. As religion is a reasonable service, so it is a pleasant one, and nothing should be done or said to represent it otherwise.

Very long services are what few can bear, and what none are the better for: especially young persons and children. "Short and sweet" is a maxim which applies to nothing better than to religious duties; between which there ought to be proper intervals, to unbend, and thus to strengthen the mind, as well as to refresh the body. And such there may be consistently with that course which has been

recommended in the foregoing pages ; the whole of which will not necessarily occupy near so much time as most persons in business usually spend in their daily labour.

And what is there unreasonable or burdensome in devoting such a portion of time one day in the week to those employments which tend to improve our minds in knowledge and holiness, and to fit us for heaven? “ Surely (to use the words of the above eloquent and experimental writer). “ an entire day should “ not seem long amidst such various employ- “ ments. It might well be deemed a privilege thus to spend it, in the more immediate “ presence of our heavenly Father, in the “ exercises of humble admiration and grateful homage ; of the benevolent, and domestic, and social feelings, and of all the “ best affections of our nature, prompted by “ their true motives, conversant about their “ proper objects, and directed to their noblest “ end.” P. 195.

It deserves inquiry, upon what principle it is that so many persons plead so strenuously for more relaxation and amusement on the Lord’s day than is usually allowed, or can be taken,

taken, on other days? It ought to be considered, but it is forgotten by such, that were it not for this divine institution they would ordinarily be engaged the whole week in the laborious employments of their secular callings. So that in pleading for peculiar indulgence on the Sabbath in carnal recreations, they are chargeable with this great inconsistency, that they tacitly allow the perpetuity of the Sabbath, while they deny or forget the religious design of it. They would keep it as a day of REST, but not as a *religious* festival. But if it be not a *religious* festival, a SACRED REST, consecrated to the service of God, it certainly is no divine institution; for there is no rational ground to believe, that God has set apart every seventh day as a day of *pleasure*. Consequently they who do not think themselves bound to improve it for *religious* purposes HAVE NO RIGHT TO A SABBATH AT ALL.

If any should urge, that they consider it as a mere *civil* institution, and that they lay aside their stated worldly business only in compliance with the laws and general custom of their country; I answer, that upon their principles,  
if

if they were general, the Sabbath ought to be abolished, as having a tendency injurious to civil society. But while it exists, a wise and good man, should he be supposed to adopt such a sentiment, would be glad to employ this weekly leisure so as would be least prejudicial to himself or others, and most advantageous to both. In that case, it is presumed, he would vary but little from the course above recommended. But I am willing to suppose most of my readers to be convinced in their judgments of the divine original, and the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath. To the understandings of such I submit the plain hints which have been suggested with respect to the most profitable manner of spending it, and to their consciences I appeal whether their own habitual conduct has been conformable or not to the dictates of their minds. If this tract should fall into the hands of any who have hitherto been in the habit of making light of the Sabbath, and of practising the abuses of it which have now been exposed, I would earnestly expostulate with such on the impropriety and immorality of their conduct. *Why do ye that which it is not lawful*



*lawful to do on the Sabbath-day?*—Will you plead the want of time on other days? Surely six days in seven are abundantly sufficient for all the worldly business or pleasure which are at all necessary for your subsistence or your health.—Will you urge the want of express precepts in the New Testament for such a strict observance of this day? What need is there of express precepts to oblige a Christian to the best improvement of his time and religious advantages, so as most effectually to promote his own spiritual welfare and that of his domestics?—Will you say, that such a rigid observance of the day is making it a *Jewish* Sabbath, contrary to the liberal spirit of Christianity? I am not pleading for mere ceremonies, by which the Jewish Sabbath was distinguished, nor for that sort of holiness which was attributed to it under the legal dispensation, nor for such a rigid abstinence as the Pharisees practised. But only for the best improvement of the time which the Sabbath affords for our own and each other's spiritual benefit, agreeably to the original design of the institution, as appointed at the creation.

If

If still any should urge, that such a course of religious exercise as that now recommended, in the closet, and in the family, as well as in the church, is TOO SEVERE, and more than they can go through without making the Sabbath burdensome, I must in faithfulness propose to such persons the plain inquiries following, and beg they will suffer their consciences to answer.—Is there not reason to fear that the ground of this objection is the want of a truly religious principle? If you had that relish for divine and spiritual pleasures which you have for sensual ones, would you think it a burden to devote the chief part of one day in the week to the enjoyment of them? And if these spiritual exercises be really such a burden as you complain of, I ask once more, —How do you expect that you will be able to relish the constant everlasting employments of the celestial world, and what foundation have you to hope for a place there? There none can be admitted, nor can they rationally expect or desire it, but such as are here formed to a meetness for the pleasures and employments of that holy region.

A few

A few words to persons of the opposite character shall close the whole. You have been inured, perhaps from your earliest years, to sanctify the Sabbath in the manner now recommended. And have you not reason to reflect upon it with satisfaction and thankfulness to God? Your own experience of the pleasures and benefits of such a course strongly confirm you in the propriety of it. Go on, Christians, in the *good old way* which you have hitherto pursued; and let no reasonings of those who profess the greatest liberality of thinking, any more than the examples of the rich, the gay, and sensual, ever influence you to alter a course which you have found so beneficial, nor occasion you to relax in the discipline of the families committed to your care. By the regard you owe to the welfare of the rising generation, and to the interest of religion in the world, I beseech you maintain your steadfastness, in strongly inculcating both by precept and example, a strict regard to the day of the Lord; and while you shew politeness and civility to all, admit none into your houses on that day, who would break in upon the orders of your family; nor suffer your

G                      domestics,

domestics, so far as you have any influence, to spend their time where you know God is dishonoured, and their souls are likely to be ruined.—In the present degenerate age great resolution is necessary in order to preserve a consistency of conduct, and great prudence and kindness also are requisite to prevent your good designs from being misinterpreted and defeated. Let it plainly appear to all around you that you are conscientious, but not morose; and that you are actuated by a pure regard to the honour of God and the good of the souls committed to your care. And while *you remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy*, endeavour to make it as cheerful and pleasant a day as possible. *The voice of rejoicing and salvation becomes the tabernacles of the righteous*, every day, and surely not less on *this day which the Lord has made*\*. Especially rejoice in the prospect of that better world above, where you shall spend an everlasting Sabbath in *the general assembly and church of the first born*.

\* Pf. cxviii. 15, 24.

T H E   E N D.



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